

TOPIC 19: FOOD SECURITY

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In 2012, more than 14% of US households reported that they were food insecure or had low or very low food security—the lack of reliable access to healthful, quality food due to a lack of money or resources—for some portion of the year. The ability to manage one’s diabetes and maintain normal blood glucose levels is dependent—among other factors—on access to adequate, healthful foods that provide a balance of nutrients. In addition, the cyclic nature of food insecurity impacts diabetes self-management in terms of consistency in meal patterns. Finally, food insecurity and concern about adequate food for oneself and one’s family is a significant source of stress.

KEY MESSAGES

1. Diabetes is a disease in which nutrition and meal planning are important components of successful self-management. Food insecurity has a significant impact on the individual’s ability to purchase and consume healthful meals on a regular basis.
2. Learning where to access resources such as food stamps, meal programs, food banks, meal delivery services, and other food assistance programs is the first step to addressing food insecurity.
3. Learning how to purchase and prepare low cost foods and foods obtained through food banks is an important part of diabetes meal and menu planning.

BACKGROUND

Food insecurity is defined as “limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.” A household or individual who experiences low food security consumes food that is of reduced quality, may have little variety in their food choices, and may consume less desirable foods. In general, these households or individuals are not experiencing hunger. At a minimum, the household or individual experiences anxiety and may have to make trade-offs between food, medications, and other basic needs. A household or an individual who experiences very low food security is experiencing hunger, has disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake and may skip meals altogether for periods of time. Food security is related to having enough money; it is not related to medical or other issues that interfere with the individual’s ability to eat.

When one has limited money to spend on food, choices are often limited to a few low cost, calorie-dense, and nutrient-poor foods. In addition, food insecurity is often a cyclic occurrence, where the individual alternates between times when food is available and times when it is extremely limited. When food is available the individual may establish a pattern of binge eating that alternates with periods of more restrictive eating. Balancing medications and activity becomes increasingly difficult with an erratic eating pattern and further impacts blood glucose management. A cyclical eating pattern puts the individual at risk for both hyperglycemia during periods where food is available and for hypoglycemia when skipping meals. Cycles of food insecurity may result in the individual reducing their medications in order to pay for food or other basic needs.

Assisting participants with learning to plan and prepare meals on a limited budget should include:

- Applying for Washington State's Basic Food Program (SNAP or food stamps)
- Identifying appropriate food assistance programs that meet individual needs and that are accessible for the individual
- Teaching individuals how to shop, select, plan for, and prepare healthful meals with low cost ingredients.

PATIENT OUTCOMES/GOALS

By the end of the educational session, the client with diabetes will be able to:

- If eligible, apply for Basic Foods or SNAP
- Identify food assistance programs in their area that are accessible and meet their individual needs.
- Identify strategies to shop for and prepare healthful meals using low cost ingredients that meet their personal preferences and cultural norms.
- Talk to their health care provider about drug/medication assistance programs.

CHW ACTIONS	PARTICIPANT ACTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the food security status of the participant. Provide information and/or assistance about the Basic Foods Program (EBT or SNAP). • Assist the client in identifying additional food resources that are needed for diabetes management • Teach and/or provide meal planning resources • Assess whether the client is limiting medication due to a lack of resources • Refer to community kitchens or other meal programs as appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for Basic Foods if you are not already getting this help. Contact Washington State Basic Foods program at http://foodhelp.wa.gov/basic_food.htm or by calling 1-877-501-2233. • Find food assistance programs that are in the area that are nearby and will have foods you are used to eating. • Make a budget for food and make meals using low cost foods. • Talk to your provider about concerns about the cost of medications and what help there is to get low-cost or free medications.

TOOLS/TEACHING AIDES

- None

HANDOUTS

1. **Topic 19 Coversheet**.....[English](#) | [Spanish](#)
2. **Healthful Eating on a Budget**.....[English](#) | [Spanish](#)
Source: [Public Health – Seattle & King County](#)
3. **Basic Food Groups and Suggestions**[English](#) | [Spanish](#)
Source: [Public Health – Seattle & King County](#)
4. **Guidelines at the Food Bank**[English](#) | [Spanish](#)
Source: [Public Health – Seattle & King County](#)
5. **Action Plan**.....[English](#) | [Spanish](#)
Source: [Public Health – Seattle & King County](#)

TOOLS/TEACHING AIDS, REFERENCES (FOR REFERENCE ONLY)

- Emergency Feeding Programs/Food Distribution Sites
2011 Aging and Disability Services Senior Congregate Nutrition Services Sites
Hot Meals Resource Directory
- Food Banks Serving Seattle and King County Directory
How to Apply for EBT in Washington State

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